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DISCIPLINED YOUTH

NECESSARY FOR

THE DUTIES OF MIDDLE LIFE

AND THE

COMFORT OF OLD AGE.

A Sermon founded on Lamentations, iii. 27, and delivered to the Young People of the Borough of Bedford, Pennsylvania, on Sabbath night, the 31st of December, 1837.

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BY REV. BAYNARD R. HALL, A. M.

AUTHOR OF "A NEW AND COMPENDIOUS LATIN GRAMMAR," &c.

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REV. SIR,—

Having listened with pleasure to the eloquent address, delivered by you, on last evening, to “the young people of Bedford;” and highly appreciating the justness of the views it contained; we respectfully solicit your consent to its publication, in order to give it as wide a circulation as possible.

A compliance with our request will confer a benefit on the youth of the present generation, and much oblige,

Very respectfully, your humble servants,

A. KING,  
S. L. RUSSELL,  
B. FRANKLIN MANN,  
W. T. DAUGHERTY,  
JAS. S. BROWN.

To the Rev. B. R. HALL.

*Bedford, Jan. 1, 1838.*

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*Bedford, Jan. 5, 1838.*

GENTLEMEN,

A copy of the Sermon desired in your note of Jan. 1, 1838, is at your disposal, with my thanks for the honour designed me by its publication. I hope we may not be disappointed in our wishes for its acceptance and usefulness.

Yours, with kindness and respect,

B. R. HALL.

Messieurs A. KING,  
SAMUEL L. RUSSELL,  
B. FRANKLIN MANN,  
W. T. DAUGHERTY,  
JAS. S. BROWN.



## S E R M O N .

“ IT IS GOOD FOR A MAN THAT HE BEAR THE YOKE IN HIS YOUTH.”

*Lam. Chap. iii. 27.*

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FOR the purposes of the present discourse, human life may be divided into three stages: youth, middle life, and old age. Measuring by the time that we are under the authority of parents, and afterwards under the authority of opinion, youth may extend from the period of incipient infancy to the vigour of physical manhood; terminating with about the thirtieth year of life. Then begins middle life. This, determined by defects of mind and body becoming ordinarily then visible, and by the timidity towards new enterprises, and the despondency towards the former then manifested, ends, perhaps, with our fifty-fifth year; lasting, consequently, only five-and-twenty years. The third period, old age, now begun, and which under suitable regimen would generally cease with the extinction of life at threescore and ten years from our birth, is, by criminal abuse and negligence, usually ended five or ten years earlier than the assigned limit.

Viewing man as born for others as well as for himself, as constituting part of a divinely organised social state, or of a state necessarily resulting from his physical and mental organization, youth may be regarded as an age of preparation, and middle life as an age of activity: for it is then only, in the middle state, when the powers of our nature have all been properly disciplined, the passions controlled, the appetites curbed, forbearance practised, and prudence exercised, that we are ready to serve our generation in the orderly and full discharge of every duty.

It is here assumed that young persons, a few excepted that are prematurely worthless, all anticipate a time, when they shall mingle in the busy scenes of the world, not as mere men and women, or as spectators at a show, but to act their several parts as husbands, wives, and parents, as rulers and teachers; a time when they shall share in its enterprises and honours, no longer humble imitators, but themselves models; not the servants, but the masters of opinion; and not impelled by, but directing, the spirit of the age.

To the young, therefore, it becomes an obvious and important inquiry, "*what preparation can best fit us for one main end of our existence, the benefit of our generation: and how shall we become adequate to discharge all our duties with dignity and success?*" Our present discourse is designed to answer in some degree this question.

Before, however, we proceed to detail, let us consider one or two preparatory remarks; on which, indeed, the force and propriety of our whole reply entirely depend.

In the production of grand effects, not the single operation usually of one cause, but the combined and harmonious operation of several, may be traced. So in life, moral, political, or any other good, depends not on mere talent or genius, or enterprise, or industry, but upon the union of all these and similar causes. Nay, good sometimes depends not even on the union of any active causes, but upon caution, patience, disinterestedness; and sometimes upon a cessation from all attempts and labours. Men very often must be enlightened, soothed, entreated, and led, even for their own advantage: and here we shall need all our passive and scarcely any of our active virtues.

The main preparation, therefore, for youth is a discipline of restraint and self-denial.

Knowledge is by no means to be undervalued; without adequate knowledge, no complete discharge of duty can ever

occur; yet, while the acquisition of knowledge is one end in discipline, the young need more to be taught self-government, self-respect, self-knowledge, and the consequent habits and qualities. Differences in success are by no means so much attributable to differences in talents and learning, as to differences in caution, prudence, forethought, self-control, and the like habits: and, indeed, it is in these habits and qualities that boys differ from men, and not, so commonly as is imagined, in talents, genius, or even acquirements.

With these remarks in remembrance you are now prepared for the application of our text, in answer to the inquiry already proposed.

The sentiment designed by Jeremiah, when he uttered these words, "*It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth,*" was, that it is good to bear affliction in youth: but, since afflictions are advantageous mainly in producing self-denial, self-government, and self-knowledge, the text may be fairly extended to any other discipline producing similar results. As the neck, therefore, of a rebellious ox is bowed down by the yoke, and his vast strength thus rendered subservient to the master's purposes, so must young persons be subjected to wholesome and severe discipline, that they may best answer the designs of a benevolent Creator in forming men social beings.

1. Young persons must be subjected, then, to *the yoke of a severe and laborious moral and intellectual education.*

Since a portion of the young now present are in their minority, we may here address our remarks in the first place, to parents and guardians. And if these understand and rightly appreciate our prefatory remarks, they see the justness in saying "*the yoke of a severe and laborious education.*" But, unhappily, many parents and guardians think, that to impart knowledge is the sole purpose and duty of teachers. Such persons value a system of education only by its seeming power to afford information; and, usually, if a very large

amount of what is *deemed* knowledge be not acquired in a very short time, they either change the method or the teacher, or they cut short the children's education at its commencement.

But, we repeat again and again, that simply to give knowledge is not the sole end of judicious instruction; it is not even its leading end. Were it possible, which it is not, properly to train the mental, the moral, and the physical nature, and still impart absolutely no knowledge whatever, one thus disciplined would be pre-eminently better qualified for the duties of the middle life, than another of boundless knowledge and yet of an undisciplined mind and heart. The art of acquiring and of arranging and of applying knowledge; the art of thinking and reasoning and concluding; the art of prompt acting on occasions and in emergencies: these and similar most delicate and difficult arts,—arts, in which these twattling and conceited days have made no improvements,—these are the true ends of intellectual and moral discipline. Hence even the very instruments of this discipline, like the means often used to strengthen the human frame, to give grace to the person and dignity to the deportment, are often with safety laid aside after they have subserved their uses: and hence many individuals having in the noble and honourable and difficult duties of life ample employment for the full exercise of all their powers, feel no longer the need of the same studies and exercises that disciplined their youth.\*

Is it asked by parents and guardians what constitutes the severe education now discussed? We reply:—1st., that mere children should be taught among other matters self-denial, self-government, and the like, together with the elementary parts of simple sciences and arts, always where possible at home, and usually, but not exclusively, by the mothers: and 2dly., that as soon as the bodily health will admit, (the advice of

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\* Where the duties of life will admit, all educated men, as well as professional scholars, will be fully compensated, however, by continuing and extending their acquaintance with the classics and the mathematics.

competent physicians here being asked,) children, both male and female, should be placed under learned and religious preceptors to complete a course, and that no stinted one, of what is usually termed the classics and the mathematics.\*

We shall now, however, address those young persons present, freed by consent or by law from the parental authority.

Without adverting to your previous opportunities, your education must now be completed by yourselves; and in some instances must even be commenced. But this need occasion no uneasiness; because, in the first place, it is often a decided advantage never to have had what is sometimes called schooling; and in the second place, after all, that part of our education which may properly be considered our self-education is decidedly the most valuable. Nay, persons almost wholly self-educated, have very often become the most distinguished.

It is, indeed, a truly pitiable sight to behold many young people indolently lamenting the want of schools and teachers and favourable opportunities, when all can do so much for their own improvement, and not a few can do more for themselves than the vast majority of common schools could do for them. If the young would only seriously set about the work of self-instruction, even with the poorest materials and instruments, they would be amazed at their progress in all that is valuable, and with what unexpected success they had overcome difficulties seemingly at first invincible. But let such distinctly remember the end of all discipline, that it is *not* the mere acquisition of knowledge, but the exercise of the mind. Hence, if after even severe study, we fail to comprehend fully, we have still gained the main object of our efforts, practice in thinking. The very exertion made and repeated again and again is of vast price, even if we should be for the present utterly defeated: and this habit of the soul, thus dearly bought, will, under different circumstances, make one master of many

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\* The experience of the author and his observations, independent of all reasoning on this point, make him confident, that the *best morals* as well as the best learning, are the results of the good old course recommended above.

difficult subjects. Let the young, therefore, begin with fit subjects of discipline in the best way possible; let them persevere, and as ability and knowledge increase, let them extend and systematize their labours, correct their errors and seize all accessible aids, and in despite even of no previous education, we shall see all happier, and not a few elevated to higher walks in life, than otherwise they are ever destined to reach.\*

One reason why we *so often* condemn the reading of fictitious works may now be seen. To such works, as far as *ordinary* readers are concerned, there are many objections: their tendency is usually immoral; they vitiate taste; they misinform us; they give false and exaggerated views of individuals, presenting mere fancy pictures of aggregated virtues and vices; they defile the imagination and inflame the passions; they beget a disgust of daily and common life.—But the objection now urged is, that such works are not difficult enough for studies, and are indeed, even by their authors, designed solely for amusement. Where young persons, therefore, are seeking to improve, and especially such as have little previous cultivation, and need all their time and money for nobler purposes, to these we give as our most deliberate advice, that this very night they ought honestly to collect and burn without mercy all their novels and romances; and with the end of the year discontinue those newspapers, the sole recommendation of which is their “original and selected stories and tales.”

2. Young persons must, in the second place, submit to *the yoke of good society*.

We cannot study always. Recreation is necessary to digest our mental as well as our corporal food. Some things, too,

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\* Studies recommended are, Arithmetic, Algebra, the higher Mathematics: Natural and Mechanical sciences: Latin, Greek, French, and German languages: the English classics, such as Addison, Shakspeare, (not as a mere writer of plays,) Milton, &c.: Political Economy: Mental and Moral Philosophy: Composition, &c. &c.: above all, the Bible.

can be learned only from our observation and from the testimony of others. It is also important to see models in the discharge of public and domestic duties: and we are long compelled to float with the tide of opinion before we may venture successfully to stem it. In short, for many reasons, society is necessary to us: and no pleasures are more exciting than those of companionship. And yet it is precisely here that the young are in danger especially of losing all the advantages of private discipline, and of contracting habits fatal to all their expected success. To them there is no safety except in good society; and without that, they had better be without any.

Good society is indeed severe in its external appearance; and hence the young rarely seek such, regarding it as a mere hinderance to hilarity and pleasure: but if we are seriously seeking improvement, we must at all times be found in this company. With such we must ride, or walk, or play, or see paintings, or hear music, or attend elections or innocent amusements, or do any of the lawful acts of life: and occasions innumerable will arise, of asking advice and hearing opinions on religion, politics, literature, the fine arts and sciences, and of obtaining hints and directions on important pursuits and studies; we shall find a thousand knotty difficulties solved and perplexing intricacies unravelled, see many living exemplars of our written rules, and, finally, among other benefits, become strengthened in our correct conclusions and rectified in our erroneous ones.

Is it asked, what is good company? Without any negative description, we reply, by good society is meant, the best educated and disciplined; the most moral, prudent, sober, and religious; in a word, the best citizens. We believe, too, that good society is still better when composed of both men and women. Nor is the contemptible frivolity of most mixed companies any objection to our remark; for if women were all educated as they might and should be, and, we are persuaded, will be, no society could be so pleasant, so honourable, so elevating, as that in which these women formed a part.

Well educated women never would or could form a part where men, vicious, rude, and foolish, obtained or even expected admission.

Let none say, good society is difficult to find; because it exists larger or smaller in every community. Nor let any say, it is impossible to get admittance into it: for although this society has its barriers and restraints, it has none other than utility, virtue, patriotism, and religion itself, impose; and if truly good, it voluntarily opens its very bosom to the young, being grieved by their refusal, and not by their attempt, to enter.

3. In the third place, the young must wear, and that constantly, *the yoke of temperance.*

Intemperance from intoxicating liquors, so common, alas! is doubtless from that circumstance, the first, and with most of my hearers, the only kind supposed to be now meant. Prevalent and mournful as this vice is, what wonder that so many, so very many, should against this rock dash all their hopes of peace, usefulness, and honour! The grand, and in numerous instances the sole lesson taught the young is, "to drink." To this they are welcomed with smiles and wheedled by flattery; yea, are often assured that to drink frequently and largely, is one evidence of an independent soul and generous disposition. The houses where we visit, the hotels that refresh us, the stores where we deal, the places of our recreation; the men that frame our laws and the men that execute; the philosopher, the patriot, and, may I not add, in some cases the divine; even lovely woman with misapplied entreaties; ah! even the fathers on whose knees we have sported in infancy, and the very mothers from whose bosom we have drawn our sustenance;—these, all these, in a thousand ways, mix, and dilute, and sweeten, and render fragrant with spices and sparkling with beauty the bowl—the damned bowl—to overcome our natural distaste, to subdue our shame, to abate our fears, to lull our conscience, to make us most abandoned, most infatuated, most heaven-daring sinners.



We stay not to prove; for all know how drunkenness debilitates the body, poisons the breath, enervates the soul, brutalizes the appetites—yea, transforms man into the very brute. We too well know, that drunkards, should they even reach the middle life, become objects of pity to the good, of scorn to the proud, of grief to their friends, mere examples of warning and beacons of danger to the sober, and how, at last, the groaning community feels in a measure refreshed, when the bloated and unseemly bodies are covered in the grave.

Temperance, therefore, nay, entire abstinence from what intoxicates, must be rigorously practised by the young; and yet this species of temperance is not the sole one now recommended. Our desires, our appetites, our passions, in the use of things innocent and pleasant, must be studiously moderated; because this self-denial and control are the means of affording health, time, money, and spirits for our very studies, and is itself one paramount design of our very discipline. Would we ensure success? then we must be temperate in all things; in eating, in apparel, in recreation, in the enjoyments even of good society, in study itself: and then shall we be well fitted for many duties of middle life, and obtain, even at the time, high degrees of self-satisfaction and peace.

4. Again, I would remark, in the fourth place, that, not a little from experience, and much from observation and also from the nature of the divine economy in the government of the world, I am fully satisfied, that the preceding directions, few and general as they are, must and will, if faithfully obeyed, place a man in after life upon elevated ground among the virtuous and honourable: but if we would be certain of success, and if we would aspire to rewards nobler than the emoluments of place and the approbation of men, if we would be had in everlasting and distinguished remembrance when mere worldly great men shall have been forgotten, then must we wear in youth the easy yoke of our Lord Jesus Christ's moral and intellectual discipline. Without that yoke men

may and very often do by other discipline become extensively useful to their fellows, and obtain merited honours and respect; because God permits men to gain their proposed rewards: but if in addition to perishing, we would gain immortal ones, nay, if we would become, as we have intimated, entirely certain of even perishing rewards, then must we become submissive disciples in the school of Christ.

5. But I must hasten to mention, in the last place, a means of discipline not employed in the schools, nor found in books, nor applied by ourselves; a discipline unpleasant indeed to all and specially so to the young, but one of incalculable value and productive of the sweetest fruits—I mean affliction.

Before a man is really fitted for life, whatever be his mental powers and acquisitions, or his personal dignity and comeliness, or all his adventitious qualities, he needs many severe lessons to transform his very nature: he must know himself; his self-conceit must be eradicated, his haughtiness humbled, his impatience subdued, his presumption chastised, his watchfulness aroused, his indolence punished, his selfishness discarded. To accomplish all these arduous tasks—each an herculean labour—affliction is the only competent discipline: and that is God's blessed mode of instructing his own children.

Yet be it distinctly noticed, afflictions will do us no good, unless we are patient and observant of their end and uses. Properly used, they are a blessing; improperly, a curse. Let the young, therefore, in all disappointments, or deluded hopes, or sickness, or poverty, or reproach, or bereavement, or sorrows of any sort, be well assured that a merciful and wise Creator is thus showing, not merely his anger at sin, but his desire to discipline men for the noble purposes of the social state and for the rewards of the future: so that in the latter days, all may say in the leading sense of our text,—“*It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.*”

From what has been said we may infer that it is *good* to bear the yoke in youth for the following out of many reasons:—

1. It answers the end designed and nothing else will. For want of discipline men can encounter only disappointments and chagrin. Without this, in presumptuous haste they engage in schemes infeasible, or beyond their capacities, or demanding more skill and prudence than they possess; and hence, after a few defeats, they yield to other persons, inferior often in native talents, but superior in tact, forethought, and patience. Happy if the defeated could retire with good grace; but retiring with feelings of mortified pride and vanity, they sink into the lower levels, and there vent malignant spleen in endeavours to drag down the others and to blacken their characters. We all have remarked this an hundred times; and we now, without any claim to the prophetic spirit, can plainly foresee, that, unless God's renovating Spirit prevent necessary consequences from his own abused laws, the idle, lounging, trifling young persons here or elsewhere, must descend down the scale of honourable reputation to the snarling and captious maligners, or at best, to be classed as mere instruments to be used, and slaves to be ordered, according to the wisdom and will of the well-disciplined.

2. To bear the yoke in youth is good, because it is so truly noble. Contrast one that bears it with one that does not, only in a few particulars: the first is sober and cheerful, the second frivolous; the one cultivates the soul, the other pampers the body; the one lives for his fellows, the other solely for himself. The disciplined person is lord of his appetites and passions, the undisciplined is the mere slave of their clamorous demands; in a word, the former does every thing that lifts him up towards the angels, the latter, every thing that thrusts him down towards the devils.

3. Again, the course prescribed this evening, will, if followed, prolong the period of middle life far into the period of old age.

Proper care of the body and the avoidance of all excesses

in diet will, as we all know, make the human frame more lasting; but the discipline in question will retard for many years the mental imbecility of old age, and, generally, will prevent any degree of that weakness in the form of dotage and second infancy. No fact in the history of man is better attested than that our minds prematurely fail, simply because of disuse; and our minds must always be disused if we have never in youth acquired habits of thinking and studying. Much learning in cases of physical weakness may, perhaps, have made some "*mad*;" but beyond a doubt the want of all learning has in old age, when the bustle and stir of the middle state are past, rendered many thus. Very many literary persons by preserving studious habits to the last, have reached extreme old age, with the perceptible loss or even decay of no mental power; whilst a few such, from some chance or indolence, having discontinued their studies, have exhibited symptoms of premature weakness, and even of idiocy.

4. How good a thing in old age, to reflect that one submitted to the yoke in his youth! By that he has been able to discharge with honour and satisfaction to himself, so many duties profitable to his fellow-men! By that he has nobly won the veneration always paid to a hoary head after a well-spent life! How calm the evening of such a life! How unlike the picture of gloom falsely thought to be necessarily that of declining years!

5. Lastly, if one has lived as is here supposed, and has worn the yoke of Christian discipline; how blessed, not merely the retrospect of the past, but the anticipation of the future; what joys are his in contemplating an assured reward, a crown of glory and honour; and whilst he has a heart to accomplish yet many good things for his generation, how he even longs for the coming of a messenger, ghastly and terrific to the faithless, but to the wise servant an angel of mercy, smiling, glorious, and welcome.

Such, young men and women, are a few leading directions in answer to our proposed inquiry; and such, a few of the many advantages resulting from the discipline enjoined. What shall be the effect of this evening's instructions upon you? We dare not hope all here will be benefited; mournful experience of the almost invincible levity and the presumptuous and arrogant confidence of too many young people, forbids that hope; nay, bids us fear derision and even scorn from some that we would fain help.

Is it too much, however, to believe that some in this most interesting assembly have, as they listened, come to solemn and fixed resolutions to begin the course this night recommended? It must be so. Surely some of those present look soberly upon their weighty responsibilities; surely some are burning with a sacred ardour to discharge with honour and success the noble duties of life; surely some are captivated by the picture of moral grandeur pertaining to the disinterested performance of those duties and to the dignified demeanour of Christian meekness under the ingratitude of the wicked; surely some here abhor being mere drones in the political hive, or mere tools to be employed by others, or, instead of standing forth in bold relief amidst the architecture of society, to become hateful excrescences on the body politic, then to be cut off by public sentiment, by loss of liberty, or perhaps by the sword of justice. It must be that some here, looking onward to the realities of old age, desire, then, the retrospect of a well-spent life and the joyous expectations of a life to come.

By all these your lofty and holy purposes this night formed; by the demands of the coming generation, destined to be either the better or the worse from your conduct; by the preciousness of our liberties, bought with blood, liberties to be transmitted to posterity by your virtues and knowledge, or lost by your vices and ignorance; by the majesty of a nature fitted for duty and for the endurance of suffering and trial; by the baseness and cowardice of sloth; by all the peace and

joy that gladden the otherwise cheerless days of old age ; by your desires of finding in death peace and joy ; by your regard of the Supreme Judge, who shall say in the day of final judgment to his faithful servants, "*well done, enter ye into the joy of your Lord,*" and to the unfaithful ones, "*depart ye accursed :*"—by all these, I now do exhort and implore you, young men and women, immediately to put on and submissively wear that yoke which inspiration teaches, and all experience confirms, it is good for a man to bear in his youth.—Amen.

THE END.

















